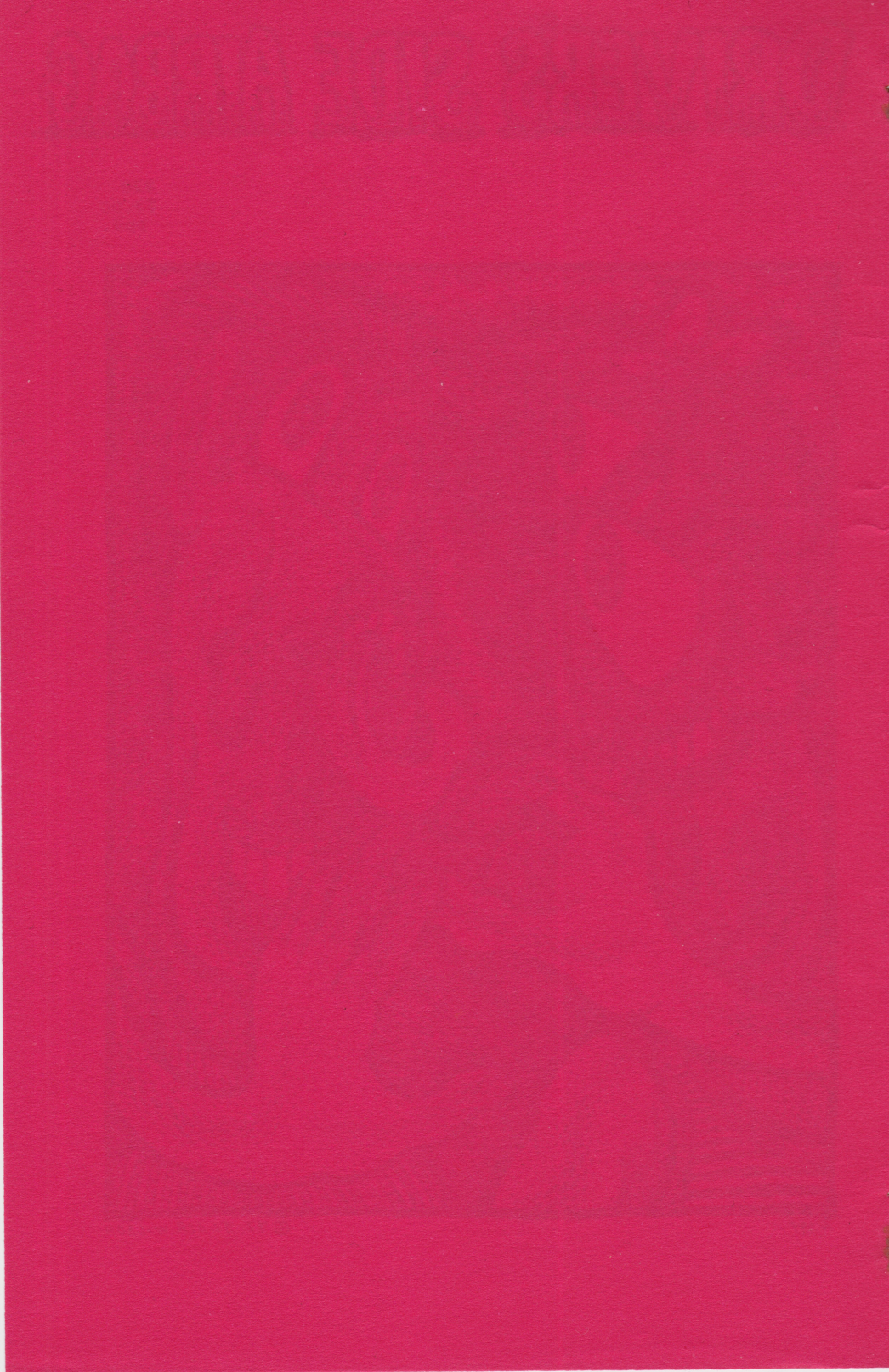


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Front cover:	Blair Wilson	Back cover:	Chris Toll
Rupert Wondolowski	1	Janet Kuypers	11, 34
Jeffrey Little	3	Jim Siegrey	12
Dave Schall	3, 16	Tom Roberts	12
Kent Gowran	4	James Reling	13
John M. Bennett	4	Andrea Lambert	17
Robb Allan	4	C.F. Roberts	18
Pete Lee	4	D.L. Hiatt	20
Gina Bergamino	5	Mike Halchin	21
Todd Moore	5	Peter H. Connors	23
Richard I. Pfrenum	5, 7	C Ra McGuirt	27
Michael Sean Conway	6	Robert W. Howington	28
C.C. Russell	7	Thaddeus Rutkowski	30
Frank Hart	7	elliott	31
Alan Catlin	7, 11	Art Biggs	31
Todd Kalinski	8	Ana Christy	32
Gerald Locklin	8	S. Gustav Hagglund	33
Paula Weinman	8, 37	J.D. Rage	34
Tony Bledsoe	9	Gary Goude	34
		Oberc	36

IT'S A GEORGE JONES CHRISTMAS

by Rupert Wondolowski

She had hidden the keys to the lawnmower. He had already trashed the house looking for keys and duplicate keys to his collection of twenty-seven cars (some of them priceless antiques) but no luck: she had long ago ferreted out all his little hiding places. But the lawnmower had always been his ace in the hole. During that month he was supposedly drying out to save their marriage he used to keep a quart of vodka in the shrubs out by the pond. Then whenever he felt his demons coming on he could always get a tall healthful glass of orange juice and putter on over to the shrubs and have himself a drink to calm down. And on more than one late night desperate occasion when the car keys were all hid, he had fired up the old riding mower and tooled six miles over to Shug Baggott's carryout or to the Blue Orchid Lounge and got himself some nerve juice.

After all, he was the King of Country Music. He could ride around on a damned unicycle if he was capable of balancing with that tiny seat jammed clear up his ass. And people would still be glad to see him: "Look at that crazy old Possum, he sure does carry on." And after all, she was his First Lady. The First Lady of Country Music. She was supposed to stand by him and calm his demons. With all the pills she was on you'd think she'd have enough serenity for the both of them. Women. Can't live with 'em, 'sure as hell can't live without 'em.

But right now she was over in Florence with Peanut and Charlene, probably talking God talk and cursing strong drink. Ever since George's best buddy Peanut had given up drink and found Jesus, George had taken up nose powder and began to hear and channel two different personalities that fought within him. One was Deedoodle Duck, first cousin of Donald. The other was one George called "The Old Man." The Old Man talked through George like Walter Brennan and he was God fearin' and always trying to stop George's fun. Deedoodle the Duck loved his women and drinking and carrying on and right now he was telling George how if a certain two wires were connected George would have himself a working mower. One that would carry his meaty haunches all the way to Shug Baggott's carryout and filling station.

"Well now, I don't know's as that's a good idea," The Old Man broke in. "It's the night before Jesus was born and George should be sober for his woman when she comes home. They got gifts to wrap and Holy Songs to sing."

"Can you believe this guy?" Deedoodle laughed. "George, I believe The Old Man's growing a little pussy in his old age. Look down at his wet old lap, George, you see a pussy growing down there?"

George was getting woozy. His close-set shotgun eyes were whirling like a hypnotist's wheel in a cheap B movie. Memories of the ghostiness of the Thicket where he grew up in East TeGas were clawing at his head and insides. His thoughts were getting all fuzzed up and with Deedoodle and The Old Man carrying on he didn't know whether to shit or get off the pot.

But with those two voices crabbing him and thoughts of his whiskey-soaked Daddy beating him at three in the morning, yelling at him to sing, he dipped his nose back into the white candy and Deedoodle's voice became the more clear and friendly. He pulled on the jacket of his black leisure suit, the one with flowers he wore when he and Tammy first performed together on stage and he went spinning on his slick boots over the broken glass and overturned furniture.

It was an unseasonably warm night and a slight damp breeze blew at George's hair that was hanging in his face, over his jack-o-lantern grin and close-set whirling eyes. Just that morning Tammy had set up his hair all nice in the mirror and called him her sweet little possum king and he had felt proud. Once he got a few strong drinks in him he'd figure out something special to do for Tammy on Christmas day to make up for how he'd been carrying on.

George was halfway through signing his idol Hank's song "I'll Never Get Out of This World Alive", when the world came to an end. The heavy gray doors of Shug Baggott's carryout were locked and there was no sign of light or humanity from within. He hadn't been so heartbroken since that night after the Grand Ole Opry show when he'd been working on that slender blond honey, got her all liquored up and giggling and then when he made his big move got a handful of sausage where "her" waterworks should be.

George jerked his left arm up to look at his watch, a Mickey Mouse job that Tammy had given him on his last birthday, and the green luminescent hands told him it was only one am. "Sweet mother of Christ!" George hissed, the deep lines around his mouth looking like knife scars, "Shug's always open to 2 am. He's got nowhere's else to be. And the damned Blue Orchid 'sposed to've closed at midnight so's Billy Sherrill could go visit his sick mom."

The last five hours of boozing and snorting crept up on George like a tapir with a hard-on. The night around him began to roll and heave, his stomach lurched as he heard The Old Man snicker "Told you so, told you so," and then he was sporting his own green-beige fur all over his freshly pressed leisure suit. George was about to slip off into the darkness and despair for good when there was suddenly a loud click and the chipped doors of Shug Baggott's carryout swung open and there was a dozen of his friends grinning and waving, all holding mixed drinks and ice cold beer. At the head of the group was Tammy. Tammy all decked out in suede go-go boots and a maroon sequined mini skirt. George felt his greatness stir and nearly fell right off the riding mower.

"Merry Christmas, George!" Tammy and the rest of them shouted as the light burst on and music started up. George was just above over his shock when who should step toward him but Peanut Montgomery - and Peanut was holding a nearly full amber bottle of Jack Daniels whiskey. "George, you old possum, have yourself a big drink, your pal Peanut's back on the bottle."

Well, if George would've had enough strength or dexterity in two of his fingers right then, he would have pinched himself to

see if he was dreaming.

Well he took two happy steps toward them and then he woke up just before dawn in a pool of his vomit right outside Shug Bag-gott's carryout and filling station. He remembered singing the Carter Family song and his arm swinging out and Tammy running. The rest of it was a blur. His riding mower was about three feet to his left, turned over in a ditch with a bunch of wires tore loose and in his right hand he held his .38 caliber pistol. He slowly forced himself into a sitting position and counted the rounds left in his gun.

gristle me this, ratpick

thar's gnat's in the bowery an osprey w/patchwork wings paying its penance paying its quarter & swine to the dwarves in chain mail porkpie hats tenants

of the pacific rim highrise where the odor of baking mantle inundates the air where rickety old shaman w/nose bleeds pace the midnight halls & the flares

of thanksgiving cede way to red capped porters ushering in the glazed carrion that is christmas they lob epithets at the organ grinder convinced his parrying

& lead lined suit's the crypt to collapsing time in the lobby as a kettle roasting rock fish for the emperor's waxen cravats exchanges spaces w/the compost

heap & the nervous car contemplates its apostasy in the tectonic laundromat & the cellar w/out winds but the osprey cannot remember the lawns of matie

pitch which girdle the highrise nor the devilfish circling the dwarf's porkpie hats it can only recall the tsunami & its brass knuckles & being narc'd on by

the lip that barked w/out a warning as the porters stumbled over the coal fists clenching palm leaves & the lip it quivered so sensing the conception of trysts

altering forever the landscape of its lisp hence the monopoly of the dwarves reckoning their tithings to the climbing & the constant elevation of the shores



Dave Schall

baby sue

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Jeffrey Little

I lost it all at the tables
 Mom scolded me for a few hours
 Then passed out, drunk.
 We watched the sun rise from
 inside our eyelids
 The dawn was the razor that took off our heads
 She woke up quick
 Feeling for an empty vodka bottle
 to toss at my skull
 I picked up my scalp and left the room
 in disgust
 Mom screamed and lit the carpet on fire
 I laughed a little as I could see it
 burn in my rear-view mirror.
 A hundred miles out of town, I heard
 on the radio that Quantum Leap
 was cancelled.
 It makes you think.

Dave Schall

INSOMNIA

it's late
 as I
 shave my head
 in the dark
 the neighbors
 are shooting
 at each other
 again
 driving back
 and forth
 run my
 wounded hand
 through
 her hair and
 watch her sleep
 through it all

Kent Gowran

SHE

She disturbs me;
 a full blown rage--
 a trigger finger, greasy
 with the sweat of her
 unborn child.
 And she smiles as if
 the water in her brain
 hasn't short circuited
 her already tenuous grip
 on sanity.

She swings by the bed
 dangling like
 a partially removed sanitary
 napkin...
 She wants me to fuck her
 but I recede--
 travelling deeper into that
 murky half-light of liver disease
 nefarious to the end

The doctor said i'd recover
 but she'll just push me into traffic
 so she can see how a street wafer
 is born.

Robb Allan

THE RESURRECTION

With a mask of teeth like
 scales or an ear of corn I
 doze in the sun. Glittering on the
 spit light boils in my
 shirt. I hear you paint
 hissing across the yard, ball
 clattering in a can. Under my
 chain the grass withers and my
 hand's a balloon, empty, swollen.
 What if I have to wake,
 and speak to you skinless?

John M. Bennett

SPIDER IN MY RUM

and Coke on the bed
 stand in the morning
 daddy long legs
 what an ice cube
 becomes as is melts
 in a spindly dream
 I knock it back
 and emerge like
 a sack of elbows
 hugging the walls,
 gut full of silk thread

Pete Lee

STOMP

The very red blood reddening Rachel lay on the floor into the girl's cunt forefinger by the dead man's sperm with her knees against her I stretched out at her side all I could do was squeeze her it threw shadows of a strange inward paralysis and the white snow love for the girl and the branches lay bent I have never been so content belly up her thigh still smeared her wrists and both of mine slit trickled from her cunt I move my thumb and fuck her in turn as she sat back in my arms and kiss her mouth shoulders dragging mechanically caused by my burning of the unspeakable creature the tree trunks across the road she ran a bath and we sat on the slope the shadows of all the legs and arms entwined broken.

Kent Gowran

PEEP SHOW

licking ashes
from thigh
high boots

my clit
hard at
you humping
the floor

dollar bills
rolled and
stuffed
up your
ass

nothing like
a handjob
& leash

call me
a Goddess
as I piss
in your
mouth

it's raining
cats
& dogs

Gina Bergamino

ALMOST

pussy morgan
sd scooping
up a hand
ful of dirt
why almost i
asked side
arming a
stone across
cherokee
creek she
was ok just
as long as
i had my
fist in her
pants but
when she
saw all the
warts on
my dick
she tried
to knock em
off w/her
shoe

Todd Moore

BONEY MARONEY

(for Ardvark)

Face-down in chocolate
and cum, you're as happy as
you want to be and
you'll be picking that scab
on your wrist for as long
as werewolves do the twist
in the flashing orange and
adrenalyn lights at the end
of your precious fascination.
You'll be racing the joy
of communism like a fucking
constellation across a sea
of selective serotonin
re-uptake inhibitors.
You'll be multiplying angels
by pennies in a glacial
cave at the bottom of Jupiter's
larynx where the magnolias
bloom for as long
as werewolves do the fly
in the throbbing ginger and
drowsy lightness at the end
of your blessed fascination.

Richard Ionnsonn Pfrenum

PELICANS, BILL GRAHAM, SQUIRRELS AND ME

late on an August afternoon,
just about ready
to get out of work for the day
and i'm wasting time
with nothing better to do.
driving along the bay
past the salt ponds and sloughs.

tremendous bird sanctuary here:
egrets, pelicans
and now and then
the mighty hawk.
this was before Shoreline Park,
and Bill Graham's millionth
mega-dance club.

then Linda calls me
on the radio,
with a wounded squirrel
in the road.
it was my last bit
for the day,
so i drove by and found him
on the pavement
under massive eucalyptus trees,
twitching,
bleeding out his head
with one eye open
on the sky.

i didn't have my death kit,
couldn't drive around with assorted
syringes and a big blue bottle
of sodium pentobarbital.

it was dying,
needing out fast.
and i needed to kill him
for everything's sake.

i didn't have a knife;
shit, i didn't have
a hammer.

i looked around
and saw nothing.
i could drive him back
to the shelter and do him,
but he'd be suffering
for another thirty minutes.

no one was there

to watch me,
so my heel came down
on the skull
with a **splat!**

it was disgusting.

i needed
to get another job.

i was getting
too good at this.

i was becoming
too accustomed
w/death.

Michael Sean Conway

WILCOX USED A FARMER

match to light the
scar snaking down his
right arm sd when i
walked into linda's
room she was holding
her left tit wobbling
the nipple so it
looked like it was
saying hello i was so
busy watching the
way she made her skin
talk i didn't see
her ex come out from
behind the door til
he had a nail in
my arm & we were all
dancing linda was
screaming & cupping
her hands across
crotch hair while
i was pumping point
blank slugs into
her boyfriend's
face when i pulled
away linda's nipple
was saying something
in blood & her boy
friend was trying
to talk around the
nose on his lip

Todd Moore

A SLOW FURY IN THESE NIGHT CLOUDS AND MY EYES CLOUDED TOO

The rain dripping off the roof
is keeping me
awake
and you are never far
from my mind
though my fingers feel different
and ache
with the arthritis of distance.

The wind refuses to howl your name
as it always has
I suppose,
but my ears swear they have heard it
and strain to bursting
to hear it again.

These night thunderstorms
and the lightning
lighting the emptiness
of the bed.

It is a slow sort of crazy here
and I miss you.

C.C. Russell

IN THIS PLACE THAT LOOKED LIKE DRESDEN

In her mind there were voices
singing in a foreign language
creating a New York City that
looked like Dresden following
the fire bombing of World War Two.
The streets were strange,
fire hydrants erupting with
propane flames, sirens emitting
green gaseous objects that were
perceived as ghosts from another place.
Read tabloids, they said, and
be informed. She read: Elvis
seen on flying saucer. Baby born
able to speak of former existence.
Man returns from the dead and has
lived for ten years. She read and
she believed. It would have been
amusing if there weren't seventeen
or so planets extra in her solar
system targeted to explode
with the handful of suns set
to super nova in her head that
got stranger and more far away
with each celestial event.

Alan Catlin

THE LOVERS

They stepped off the bus
usual time, usual stop,
like always.
Against the DON'T WALK signal,
he shuffled out
into the street
and did a little dance.
"Look," he called,
"I can stop the traffic,"
though the traffic was stopped
a block away.
Her eyes grew round,
she shouted,
"Be careful!"
then laughed
as he jiggled to the other side.
He heard her yell,
"I can do it too,"
then a THUMP and a
screech of tires
then another
then some screams
and by now
he had turned around
and saw her
and he
lunged from the curb and
didn't even make it across the first lane
before
it happened to him,
too.

And there they were.

Frank Hart

TIGERSKINNED BY GOD AND MAN

Slash my faces with oranges,
iron my eyeball and chain
or breathe my brutal bones:
It doesn't signify for I
am bathed by God
and man and torn by
feedback nails.
A candle of distortion
can change my wishing
well and heal my heart
where tigerskinned ghouls
(arsons of bitches) tattoo
horrorshows on the belly
of Venus. The sky
is a lake of fire
The stars are boats
made of spirit and
beautiful skin.

Richard Ionnsom Pfrenum

MY BRAIN TASTED LIKE HELL SO I SPAT IT OUT

another
night of muscle & pain,
&
as
i
look into the still drunken mirror
at my somewhat cubist creation,
the
reflection speaks to me,

"why
so smug, dandelion?
you
can be plucked too,
you know."

i
drop the toothbrush
&
it
slides into the sink & down
the drain.

"shit!
how
in the world of greenapples
am
i
EVER going to get that thing out of
THERE!"

i
think.

Todd Kalinski

TOAD'S BROKEN REVERY

"i'm ugly," i said.
"no you're not," she said, "you're beautiful."

"no," i said, "i'm ugly. i've always
been ugly and i always will be."

"you're beautiful," she said; "to me
you will always be beautiful."

just then the waiter approached and asked,
"sir, why are you talking to your hand?"

Gerald Locklin

BY SHEER FORCE OF WILL

I awoke to sirens,
a dream of you naked
quickly fading
into the truth
of the day.

You just can't understand
how hard I try
to break
this hold I have on you.

Like the way I want
to shatter your eyes
or cut them out
of my memory.

Your fingers trace
lines of what cannot be
across goose-pimpled flesh
that knows
it can.

C.C. Russell

"YOU AND KAREN 2" SNORTS
R WHITE GIRL AS SHE RUNS
OUT INTO BLIZZARD IN HER
SPORTS BRA & SWEAT SUIT

- i. crashes full
length into drifts
- ii. thrashes wildly
- iii. mashes her
form fully
- iv. flashes camera
shots of angels

FISTS FULL OF GREAT SNOW
SNAPS, WGIRL SMASHES SWEAT
SUIT PITS INTO C.C. RUSS'S
FACE, WITH WHICH HE GAGS,
TRASHES PICTURE IN STORM
OF PUKE, OUTCRY, AND RAGE!

Paula Weinman

ANY LARGE CITY IN AMERICA

by Tony Bledsoe

I walked the block to the liquor store, losing track of the number of bums and whores I'd sidestepped. A few called my name and cursed me when I walked on without looking toward their hungry cat calls. The stench cleared my sinuses, reminding me of how cheaply life is defined outside my little apartment. It's something special to catch the shattered taxi cab street right across the chest. There isn't a whole lot that can compete with splashing through vomit on the way to the liquor store. Passing the neon shrouded sickness and the characters it seems to breed. I like to stare through the tough guys, I feel like I'm eating their eyes from their skulls. I make the budget liquor and poor myself through the door.

"Pint of gin, and I only gotta five, Bobby." I drop the crumpled fiver on the counter, thinking about the days when all my bills would roll up of their own volition, the edges caked white.

"Here it comes, Sweet." He passed me the bottle. Gin in a plastic bottle. I could see the tiny blotches on his cheeks and around his collar, and the sweat standing along his greasy hair line. He was checking me out from the corner of his eye. He shook out a brown bag from a box beneath the counter.

"You still got a number for me, Sweet?"

"No." I turned to the door, and the night lit like diamonds beyond.

"I got that jones, man."

"Yeah, I know." I started back to the apartment.

The dead men were out walking. I couldn't pull my eyes from the shadows. Too many years spent watching for the asphalt to engulf me in its' arms. Years spent passing alleys packed with my enemies. There were times when I'd count every brick, waiting for the darkness to come.

"Sweet!" A woman's voice hails me from behind. I keep walking.

"Baby, look what I got here! Sweet! Motherfucker, you hear me!" They just don't stop.

"I'll suck your cock! Sweet, you know I love it!" Yeah, I know.

More voices. Women I've known since they stepped off the bus. From twelve to sixty, and sometimes beyond. Rouge brushed on thick to mask the scars. Long sleeves or long gloves to camouflage track marks. Scabs between toes, fingers, up and down arms and legs. A million milky eyes that were either once beautiful, or are fading fast, becoming dimmer by the moment. The boys that run these blocks are some kind of wicked extraction. The women who stalk these curbs have been branded like cattle on the Ponderosa. Their pimps have nifty home-made insignia fashioned from twisted coat hangers and heated over hot plates. You'll find it difficult to get it up when you lay eyes on the puckered flesh beneath your little twenty dollar cherry's tit. I've watched husbands and fathers from the suburbs roll into the city for a little bit of weekend strange, they break down sobbing

when they spot that charbroiled breast on their piece. They'll sling snot and moan about how the whore is the same age as their daughter, promising to whisk them away from all the horror and slap a bust ticket into their paws and ship them back to Nebraska.

And the whole time the whore just drools blankly, mottled eyes winking rapidly, numbly counting the moments until the next rick. I've never seen a single piece get that bus ticket home. I have seen the johns stashed out behind some rotten tenement, grinning from a second mouth. That's just a little something extra for his trouble. Down here we really know how to reward compassion.

So I put the bricks behind me. My cock gives a little twitch, snuggling up next to the .380 auto in my front pocket. The double doors to the crumbling apartment building I own don't latch. And I can't remember the last time the buzzers buzzed. A score of sun bleached plates read the names of tenants twenty years gone. Sharing this building with me are twelve hookers, a double handful of junkies, three or four pimps, and innumerable children and dime-a-dozen sob stories. We have a wide array of bugs and rodents with which we eat, sleep, and move through the days without end.

I mount the stairs, feeling the crisp shells of cockroaches burst under my trooper boots. There's a fresh bag of garbage sagging against my door, I kick it down the hall, sending leaking diapers sliding in a half dozen directions. A door opens to my left and a quiet voice calls to me. I have heard its' echo before, even gone in search of it on occasion.

"Sweet?" Tentative. I turn toward her. She stands peeking from her room, auburn curls tumbling down to frame her features. She seemed very much like an angel to me, her face enclosed on all sides by the wreckage of my building.

"Yeah?" I speak from somewhere hollow, reaching out always splinters something inside me.

"Can I come in?"

"Why?" Sometimes I like to hurt them a little.

"I want to be with you tonight."

"You expecting Mike tonight? Like the last time you wanted to 'be' with me?"

She didn't answer, she just came across the hall and brushed against me. I kissed her lightly, her lips were warm and tasted slightly of tequila. I could smell the conditioner in her hair. She was so fresh. I pushed her inside my room and pulled the door closed behind us. She went toward the kitchen, having taken the bottle from me. She returned with a soap spotted water glass full of gin, I poured half of it down, barely feeling it.

I felt her push up my shirt and run her fingernails over the scars on my shoulders. I finished the gin and she took me to bed and did things. She could put her tongue to me and send me reeling back through all of my dead, dry souls. I could feel her hair against my face from a thousand miles away. It seemed that her panting beneath me almost started my heart beating again. The cold, stale air of my room started to whisper around us.

Later, when she'd fallen asleep and rolled from my arms, I

counted three fresh, fist sized bruises among the patch of older yellow ones on her back. It was hours later before her boyfriend began to hammer at the door to my apartment, ranting obscenely at the battered wood.

I went and got my bottle and ignored his knuckles. The bed was very warm and smelled of her as I curled up and tilted back the booze. Soon the sounds of Mike's fists seemed to boom in the distance like artillery on the horizon. When I woke up the next morning she was gone, and I swept another night's death under the bed.

The doorbell rang. "Who could be stopping by at this hour?" I thought, but I put my magazine down and walked to the door. A man in a plaid suit stood in the hallway with a worn briefcase in his hand. He flashed me a tired, business-like smile. It almost seemed genuine.

As he rambled on and on about... Well, I don't really know what he said. I don't even know what he wanted. "What is he selling?", I thought, and my head became dizzy with his confusing words. It all seemed like nonsense. But it all seemed to make sense.

I didn't like what I heard. But I tried to listen. I wanted to listen. I had to hold on to the door frame: I had to keep myself steady while this man's thoughts tried to knock me down.

I finally stopped him. "What are you trying to sell me? What are you trying to do?", I asked. The man looked at me and said, "I'm trying to sell you an ideology. I am trying to poison your mind."

I slammed the door in his face. Alone, I let go of the door frame. I fell down.

Janet Kuypers

FREE ASSOCIATION GROUP THERAPY

They started out using beer cans for openers on their wrists, moved up their arms with needles, woke up on Ward Eight, pushing wooden trolley cars into molded cardboard tunnels, trying other toys, doctors observing never interrupt their stethoscope brain wave soundings, sawing rubber limbs from invisible trees; house calls are extra for delinquent macrocephalics locked in the basement, playing with spoons on mason jars filled to different levels with water; upstairs they are screaming, "Everything that touches, hurts, let us go, let us go." Outside, after group, water fountains speak

Alan Catlin

FOLLOWING IN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL FOOTSTEPS OF WOODSTOCK II COMES A SEQUEL MADE IN THE SMOKE-FILLED BACKROOMS OF HEAVEN, SO GRAB YOUR LOVE BEADS AND PICKET SIGNS AND GET READY FOR ...

! DAYS of RAGE II

LAST AUGUST, THE DEMOCRATS ANNOUNCED THAT THEIR 1996 NATIONAL CONVENTION WILL BE HELD IN CHICAGO, SITE OF THE INFAMOUS "POLICE RIOT" OF 1968!

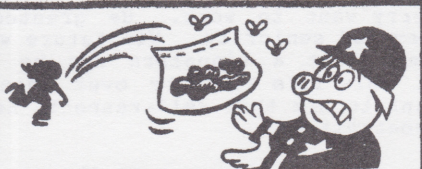
AS THE '96 CONVENTION TAKES PLACE AT THE NEW UNITED CENTER, ASPECTS OF THIS HISTORIC EVENT WILL BE RE-ENACTED ALONG THE LAKEFRONT AS A ...

PICNIC in the PARK

RELIVE THOSE EXCITING DAYS OF "PIGS & FREAKS" WHILE PARTICIPATING IN FAMILY-ORIENTED FUN LIKE...



NIGHTSTICK TAG!



BAG OF EXCREMENT TOSS!



TEAR GAS FIGHTS!



REEFER RELAY RACE!

YIPPIE SURVIVORS TOM HAYDEN AND RENNIE DAVIS WILL KICK OFF THE SHINDIG AS THEY JOIN ACTUAL PARTICIPANTS FROM THE ORIGINAL CONFRONTATION IN AN OLD-TIMER'S MATCH-UP DUBBED

DAYS of AGE!



THE WHOLE WORLD WILL BE WATCHING!

(ON PAY-PER-VIEW)

SO CONSPIRE TO

ACT NOW!

BECAUSE SPACE WILL BE

LIMITED!!!

(YES, THERE WILL STILL BE NO SLEEPING IN THE PARK!)

SCOT TROPING THROUGH THE QUADROVAMPS

by James Reling

Where's the menial sky filled with tears and steel's edge?
The lethal dose. Injection of the thrill to fly.

Fly. Flying all night like an eagle on high. Soaring like
a time of the night. The time when all is one and everything is
the same as the last.

Blamins, subliminal minds intercede the dawn's light...

UNKNOWN.

Until.

Jerry rose from his pillowing slumber and froze his mind for
the day's activities. Shower-cleanliness. Toast-nourishment.
Mourning News-information. Regards to neighbor-prudence.

All false when brought back to the dream.

Purple swirling around and around, undisturbed by the trum-
pet's blaring. A ball or perhaps an image but circling none the
less. Like a nautilus' shell, never ending. Purple trails from
behind happy to follow and leave an image embedded permanently on
his mind like staring at the sun, then closing your eyes.

Jerry went to work. He greeted others by obligation, after
all they had seniority. His future was completely controlled by
one man. Just a signature and he would not see a paycheck in
awhile. His life would be over then. And since gold was more
important to him than self-respect, he would always allow himself
to be controlled.

The prophet sleeps near the evening's edge, regulated by the
reputation of its' kind.

Must be safe. Two sugars instead of one. A little creamer,
not too much, perfect. Thought: I am now truly satisfied with
my afternoon.

Nothing was ever peaceful in the insane city, but all was
made sensical by the lunatic's keen eye.

Boom! Lunch break. Relax? Nope, here comes Spunkmiyer.
Why do schmucks always have stupid last names. Damn!, he's gonna
sit with me. Smile. Smile. "Hello, Spunkmiyer, how was your
weekend? You're looking good." Smile, smile. Can't stand this
guy.

The resting place of all that is past and the future lies
just yonder. Huge and black, deeper than anything because it is
everything except for this second. Now, it's gone and the next
one is upon us.

Back to work. Click. Click. Click. Damn, a mistake. Click. Click. Click.

From the resting place, memories of the past and future, in the shape of large, red, hot air balloons rise like bubbles in a pond. The visions, some small, and some big float by my eyes like a leisure afternoon.

Check the clock, still not five. Oh well, maybe he'd impress his boss and stay to work late. Besides, Spunkmiyer always leaves just at five and he didn't want to get stuck talking to him on the elevator all the way to the ground floor. He was truly happy about his decision for dedication. He was a good man and his boss would know it.

The insane city in the background was alit. Unnatural formations of architecture supported by the charismatic clouds above. Towers ablaze, stretching for the moon like a lazy yawn. Beautiful blue and yellow spider like structures, small round cylindrical structures, absurd uneven crane like structures, all built for no other reason than to be respected. Architecture for a madman's admiration.

Everyone had left the building. Jerry needed to make some more coffee. This time he would not have to share any of it, it was all for him. He was happy.

The only true structure in the city had its' front door wide open. Inside, the walls were cracked in an intricate spider-webbed hair-line fracture style. The cracks seemed deliberate.

Jerry returned to his desk to continue his work. Click. Click. Click. Sip coffee. Click. Click...

In this building there is a single lamp that is always burning. This lamp provided only a faint radiance like a faded glow-in-the-dark ball. A small card table set up with two chairs. One is occupied, one is not.

Jerry was getting tired but persisted, typing away as if it was going out of style.

The occupied chair contained a large man. He was wearing black armor and a cloak to cover his head and most of his face. He controlled the cards and he was always ready to deal.

Jerry called his humble faithful wife. He was sorry but was was going to be late tonight. Yes again, he was sorry. Don't wait up. He loved her. He'd try not to work too hard. Alright, bye.

The entity dealt the cards on the table in the proper formation. It studied them for a second, then disappeared as if it were never there.

Jerry picked up the telephone that began to shrilly ring and destroy the quiet buzz of the office. He put it to his ear to say hello but instead heard a loud, thundering, echoing, deep voice say "You are trapped!" Jerry, frightened, hung up the warning device.

The clouds surrounding the ancient city began to boom and streak with lightning and thunder. The devastating storm was soon in the distance.

Jerry tried to returned to his work, he was distracted though. What did the man mean trapped. Was there some kind of terrorist act going on that he was being warned about? If so, maybe he shouldn'tve hung up on the mediator. He looked outside and saw that everything seemed as it should be.

As the clouds were breaking. The infinite sided geometric steel eagle swooped. Its' adamantine talons poised. Back, of sorts, arched as only its' back could arch. Down, lower, lower, steady, catching speed, faster, faster. It was prepared to destroy or be destroyed, but would not compromise.

Jerry turned around to look at his office. Everything was in order as it should be. For the first time ever in his life, this bothered him.

The red balloons of memory began to rise like bubbles in a rapid boil.

Jerry walked over and picked up the wooden writing utensil he had upon his desk. He dropped it on the floor and smiled. He picked up another pencil and dropped it on the floor. He began to gently laugh. He picked up a stapler, dropped it and laughed some more. The telephone began to ring. He picked up the whole phone and threw it as hard as he could against the wall. It made a rushed protest shriek and fell to the ground off the hook and he heard angry mumbling; probably his boss. Jerry began to laugh, for the first time in his life he truly laughed. It was a deep, uninhibited mad man's laugh. What joy!

Every molecule in the city began to move faster and faster. Atoms like crazy frantic little fish in a pond that a rock had just been thrown into.

Jerry pulled out all of the drawers of the filing cabinets in the office and dumped their contents across the freshly vacuumed floors. He moseyed over to his computer terminal, yanked up the monitor and raised it above his head with both arms and heaved it at the windows. With a large explosion of both windows and the monitor screen at the same time, Jerry's heart began to race. He now knew what the voice had meant when it said that Jerry was trapped. He would soon be liberated.

In the chaos of the city the bird dived. It was a total

monster of energy ready to rip apart the victim he desired. The mechanical beast thrived on order and controlled sanity and had the perfect prey.

Jerry was in a mad rampage, destroying all he touched, like a reverse King Midas. He dashed for his bosses office. Inside, he ravaged as if in a PCP-mad frenzy. Knocking over the large desk, he was suddenly inspired by a pair of matches he saw laying on the floor across the room. He picked them up and lit the whole book. With the rich smell of sulfur assaulting his nostrils he tossed the flaring book in a trash can full of papers that had not been knocked over in his ravagings. The flame began to build and spread to the curtains.

The bird broke through realities and streaked towards the freshly blazing building.

Laughing, Jerry scribbled on a piece of paper "I Quit" and placed it on the overturned desk. He leisurely walked towards the elevator. He ripped off the sign that commanded "in case of fire use stairs" and pushed the down button.

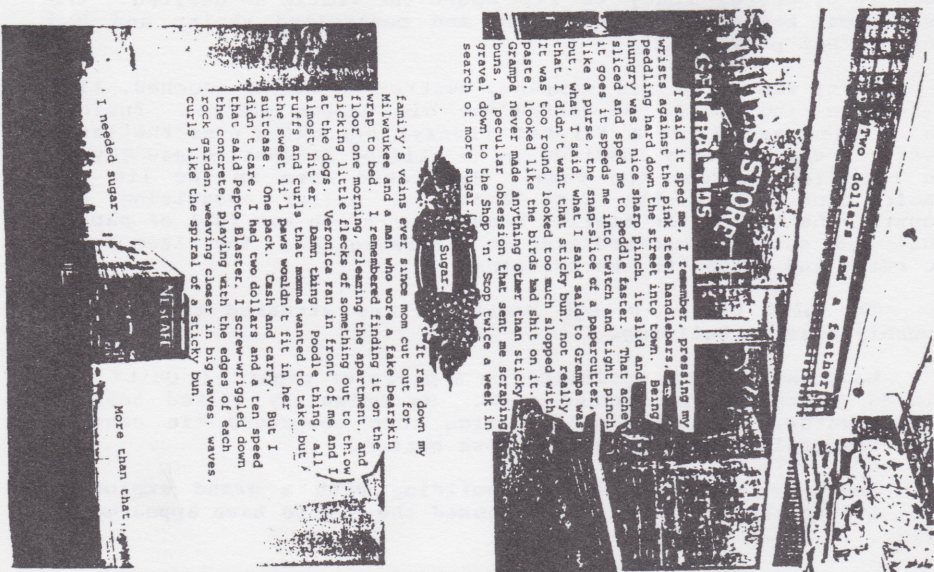
The beast collided with the building with a grand explosion that lit up the night sky that caused the sun to have appeared to arise.

Reaching the ground floor, the cold metal double-doors opened and he began to walk towards the front door. There were fireman and other professionals in the field everywhere but none seemed to see the crazed man boisterously laughing like a devil.

He walked outside and all was chaos, which was his new found love so the new city fit him just fine. He was now truly free from all restrictions on his mind and body. He really admired the architecture of the newly erected buildings though they served no purpose...

A narcotics agent
Was given some sort of fucking medal
He shot someone I think
He got his guts eaten by a dealer
The President hooked the imitation bronze
right to the casket
The widow wept with joy.
I saw it on T.V. and kept thinking
How funny it would be if
A little boy in clown make-up
Blew her head off at that moment.

Dave Schall



I said it sped me. I remember, pressing my wrists against the pink steel handrails, being peddled hard down the street into town. Being hungry was a nice sharp pinch. It slid and sliced and sped me to peddle faster. That acute it goes it speeds me into twitch and tight pinch like a purse, the snap-slice of a paper cutter, but, what I said, what I said said to Grampa, was that I didn't want that sticky, muck, muck, muck, it was too round, looked like birds had shit on it. Grampa never made anything other than sticky paste, a pee-pee obsession that sent me scrapping down to the Shop 'n' Stop twice a week in search of more sugar.

Sugar

It ran down my family's veins ever since mom cut out for him and a man who wore a fake bear skin. I remembered finding it on the floor one morning, cleaning the apartment, and picking little flecks of something out to throw at the dogs. Veronica ran in front of me and I almost hit her. Damn thing. Poole thing, all the sweet little paws wouldn't fit in her suitcase. One pack. Cash and carry. But I didn't care. I had two dollars and a ten speed that said Peppo Blaster. I screw-ripped each the concrete, playing with the big waves, waves, rock garden, waves, waves, waves, waves, curls like the spiral of a sticky bun.

I needed sugar.

More than that.

I peddled harder, pumping my twice-scabbed knees up and back and faster because something was out there I knew something was out there, even though it was Tuesday afternoon in July with the sun all day long and that there was something and I had two dollars and past me go find that sticky, muck, muck, muck, something behind and I peddled faster, maybe in town, maybe in a big white sack sweet in my hand or maybe faster, and this gravel, now-gravel road which would go and go and I'd go down to the ocean where the waves crashed in like lightning and static on the TV waves of it fuzzing in and I'd go down there and wear a big hat with feathers and be a big famous lady. Yeah. I'd go on all the talk shows with my hat and my bike and tell stories and everyone'd clap and yell and they'd give me a lifetime supply of rice-a-roni! Yeah.



Andrea Lambert

THE SHRILL
by C.F. Roberts

I enter the Crash Zone as if it's some sort of garden party, which is to say uninvited but accepted nonetheless--the whole process very democratic in nature. Quotas have become difficult to maintain and they are willing to spill anyone they can into their wastecan.

It's a siren night and the sky is as ever endless pitch black yawning over downtown like doom. Neon walls hell in pink, blue, yellow and red, most of all red, and I hear my mother's voice...

It's all night scream manic beating delirium as usual on the weekend and the sights and sounds ring immortal...the Stagnant Brothers are on their day in day out shit the overalls rage in the punies' faces bender having raised their routine hell by the Soup Kitchen for supper and now they pursue their bully act by the railroad tracks--I saw them bashing--they had Johnny the Owl Boy trapped in their brutal circle and now he's screwed because he has no friends at his back--the Stags kick the piss out of him and once he's a ragged, unconscious moppet he's just no damn fun to 'em anymore and so they leave him there as if he were naught but discarded furniture--Old Ben and the Preach come along and hoist him vomiting and spitting teeth he is carried his poor sorry beaten carcass home at one point literally having to peel his face away from the pavement--

The bell in the faraway tower factory industrial clock bongs ten ominously the bloody scenes segue in and out an off-duty traffic cop appears, admonishes the lot of them drunkenly and then vanishes; I feel my wretched hands cramp up and icy pain inches up my wrists. The Wiggled-out Mariah in her funeral lace her hair flung wildly as she shrieks in terror--I watch her face redden, burn, then crumbled like an overcooked, failed ceramic object--

Misbegotten and used up on the corner of Main and Atrocity there is a sexually abused children's choir all bruised and in mourning--they weep spring showers and a random cop will pause every rotation to shake his club at them...their tears shower and river into the gutter into the sewer and tiny streams traverse the complex bodywork of pipes around the underside of the city...the tears spill out amongst the piss and shit and bleach and waste of the whole sleeping city population, curse the waste, damn the waste--tears flow down the solemn, violated river intermingle with the sewage and out east toward forever...

Meanwhile, topside, all lights blazing in storefronts flicker a tiny second and my eyes and my nerves explode. Broken glass flies and dances--my hair instantaneously goes gray and peels excitedly from my scalp and temples like porcupine quills of fable and all is a careening negative lightning image--

A child is running sideways and reckless up the street, pointing, "the angels are dying!" I believe her. She and several hundred little friends run up the street in careless flocks.

The whole street seems to tip diagonally and tons of garbage

and paper and debris sail off along the axis to oblivion--cars smash left, right and sideways.

The huge crystal angel sculpture in the center of town explodes and sends itself everywhere in fragments--some several green bystanders are decapitated. Couples and stray dogs fuck and defecate wildly on park benches--quote one wizened witness to the action, "it got real hard to tell the humans from the animals. All had shit all over em, but that was like, beside the point."

The great glass titanic angel figure shatters it does with a great noise, and rains its' silvery ragged spore all a kaleidoscopic apocalypse where is my angel? Where is the cataclysm blizzard from whence it came? There is snow in the gutter and the street cripple sleeps crutches by his side in an eerie, singing brick and snow revelation wonderland dream silent yet wailing out in the towering, menacing black--

I hear choirs singing and buzzing off into nothing like transistorized flies emitting telepathic deathscreeams. I can't stop any of it. Worlds, entire worlds snuff out under my eyelids it is all too crowded too much--in the Oriental Bazaar rope bridges collapse sending hundreds of hapless consumers plunging to their deaths the flimsy, ornate paper pagoda lamps floating down the ugly river dampening and shorting out, the only sign anyone had ever been there to begin with.

Everything's dying in a mournful, contorted collision--my head involuntarily draws on an old playground rhyme cartoon fairytale slice of imagery the stately, loving angel I kneel before reaches over and draws a circle on my forehead...

Neon blasts and sparks and the black claims another mechanical victim and the fairytale sprites follow the angels all exploding into falling crystalline ash--

The bald woman yelps like a dog and tears down the street Olympic and hypermotivated because her ass is on fire. Her pill-box hat flies off and tumbles in the opposite direction.

Cletus storms past looking hatefully through everything. He kicks a child and spits at nothing in particular--up the street toward certain oblivion he goes surly in his muscle shirt and looking for a war. Good luck, Cletus...I'm sure you'll find a few.

I'm crawling on the sidewalk, now, so low I can taste the ghosts of the whole town's shoes. If there's anything Christ alive in this place where is it? Can I touch something that won't draw blood? I grasp and clutch at singed air...I think my thumb is broken and there's a sharp pain in my stomach that makes me frightened to look down there. I gotta puke...

Ambulances and fire engines and cruisers scream down the street in a blaring cacophony--I can see the woman over there doubled over grieving--she's belting gospel lugubrious agony like tortured Mahalia Jackson black armband shatter mercy poster child of woe--she screams in synchronization with every siren shrilling in this shit city--my mother often told me the sound of sirens distressed her; she said it always reminded her of the pain someone somewhere was going through and I know what she meant--the shrill makes me shiver in the strange, dark neon warmcold and I

wish I could hide. My mother once said, "God , how those sirens disturb me. They sound like people crying."

ONE DAY, ONE YEAR, ONE WAR!

by D.L. Hiatt

The grenadier moans in his sleep. He's making love with a dead brown woman. A small, bone thin woman with heavy milk full breast. A dead child's milk. Around the thing they make in the red mud, green tracers whiz toward Colt muzzle flashes. Rocket Propelled Grenades splinter M-60 machine-gun nest made of fallen tree trunks. B-52s, the great shining gods of the stratosphere roll thunder down wet jungle valleys in the far south. Jungles die, arklighted moonscapes of red cratered earth hold the sweating, sex-ridged grenadier as his hard, young flesh pounds her cool, brown body. Dead girl, dead mother, dead land. South of the DMZ, south of Hue, east of Pleiku, north of Nha Trang, between underfed thighs, between rice fed thighs. Overhead: "I am the God of hell fire," the B-52s sing high, high in the stratosphere, as flying telephone poles leap from Hanoi Hannan's tongue. Deep, and hard into her cool brown valley the grenadier pounds; lust, love, lust, love, sin, win, lust/love, Mother, home, God I don't want to die here. Damned youth is the sound his belly makes on hers, as they fuck death in a forest of punjee stakes, under black boroughs dripping Bamboo Vipers, "Kill me, FUCK-ing Kill me!" The Medic screams as the sniper takes off his last thumb. Don't leave your dead Marines! Not in the twisted skeletons of an Agent Orange forest, not deep in the brown earth of a VietCong tunnel, not between the thighs of a Cholon whore. Not in Laos, not in Cambodia, but in your memory.

But, in your memory, like between cool dead thighs, tracers break the mist as riverboats roster tail up mortar rocked rivers flaking fifty caliber shells from blood slippery decks. Choppers fly out of Camron Bay, like cowboys closing down a Saigon bar. C.I.A. agents give LSD to momasons. Phantoms roar, "Why don't you come home, Bill Bailey?" Down in the Mekong Delta of her thighs it's hot as hell. It's boob trapped. AND, his organism tightens in his groin, like a snake wrapping itself around a bare skull. Orphans scream for their parents as napalm rolls over them. No body bag for his cum. Not in De Nang, not in hell. (I JUST WANT TO GO HOME ALIVE!)

One day, one year, twenty years after his one war, he sucks down his third beer, and humming Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds, longs to be young and fuck with death again.

GLOW IN THE DARK SYMPTOMS

I started to ask the stained-glass corpse
if its' fingers were really edible
it just tossed some dirt on itself
rolled over with a meat cleaver
saying go pinch someone else's sternum
with a bonesaw


i gnawed on my arm for two hours
dove into the bay
then rode some ritalin boulders home
dreaming i ate a bag of choleric water mm mm
but i'm okay try me
toss your lips out the window
and i'll kiss them later i swear

Mike Halchin

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ISSUE #2 SUMMER 1995

NEW RELEASE ! NEW RELEASE ! NEW RELEASE !

Doña Juana by Mok Hossfeld

dj



dj

207 !!!!!
pages
of tales,
vile lies
and
illustra-
tions
perfect
bound
and
waiting
for you,
maybe
even
stalking
you,
but
that's
another
story
now
isn't it.

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Reviews of Mok and of *Doña Juana* include:

"The most authentic chicken-toes since Robert Walser or Charles Willeford...A page of Mok before breakfast can give you the strength of a hundred Italian Free-Masons at a hog lynching"

--Blaster Al Ackerman

Mok is one of the greatest illustrators I've come across.

--Shit Diary--

Somewhere between Alfred Jarry doing Vaudeville, Twin Peaks, and Pink Panther cartoons(?). Knockout strangeness.

--Driver's Side Airbag--

This is a book (and few books could possibly make this claim--even fewer would want to) that the religious right will be longing to burn, in fact lusting and will basically have the biggest goddamn hard-on to burn, even one thousand years from today. --Gavin McCullough

Not since J.M. Barry's *9 Foot Amazon Mad Scientist* has a book filled me with such a sense of wonder and excitement. Particularly the scene where Doña Juana urinates on Punch to determine whether she is a witch. "Is she a witch?! Is she a witch?!" I shrieked. It was then the family pastor rolled over, grabbed the book from me and told me to get some shuteye.

--Rupert Wondolowski

...the text intensely literary...This should be required reading for all those critics writing about revising and re-visioning the canon.

--TAPROOT REVIEWS--

To order copies of *Doña Juana* send \$9.00 plus \$1.00 shipping (each) to:

GLP

425 E. 31 St. Baltimore, MD 21218

HATE

by Peter H. Connors

There's no such thing as a stranger in a rest-stop convenience area at three a.m. No such thing at all. Just crunchy shells of burned out truckers and spaced-out transcontinental travelers bumping into each other as they reach for the ding-dongs and Hustlers.

You come in off the road, eight hours of solitude and rainy headlight contemplation drip off in sheets of fog passing lazily through your mind. But wired. Everybody's got some place to be, someone to see. Me? I'm on the way to Mexico via California through Tijuana. Can't wait to get there. It's 1993 and I'm twenty-three years old. I got a pickup truck painted blue, Ford, with a futon mattress in back and even though it's got 93,676 miles on it seldom does it need repair. I got a college education from a NY state school which I completed last June and since then I've been working where I can and staying where it's free. It's November. I'm doing alright.

I grew up in a suburb of Rochester NY. Good a place as any. A few weeks ago I picked up a corporate rock and roll magazine on a coffee table in St. Louis. It called me Generation X and had several explanations for why from various aging rockers. It's not the first time I've been called that. Each time from someone over forty. It's funny. They talk about the difficulty that they're having in figuring out our optimum marketing capacity because we are impressed upon by too many images. So they overload even harder to keep up. Accommodate us. They talk about our lack of commitment to occupation, struggle, prosperity. Not like in the fifties or even sixties. They were the hippies, right? I grew up under Reagan/Bush. I want to scream.

They want to know about Generation X? Take a look around. We live in a civilization poised on the brink of collapse and everybody's got a finger on the trigger. So people are starting to realize what they've got in their hands? We grew up staring down the barrel. Dealing with a mess we didn't make and nobody knows how to clean up. The sole method of perpetuating our species is the same act that is taking thousands of lives a year. Marriage is a joke. Religion is a farce. Our environment crumbles. The heroes are all dead and buried. Ruined by the probing eye of technology and media hype. They say we don't care, this Generation X. Care? About what? I've got a nine millimeter Beretta under my front seat, loaded, as I pull into the parking lot of the Quickie mart. I reach down, feel for the butt, and fit is snugly into the back of my Levis waistband. The back is better for concealing. I pull my jacket over the grip and turn to go inside.

Fluorescent lights: a stinging slap to the head of the weary traveler. I curse them as I trip the notification beeper attached to the glass entrance door of the store. I bump into a display of candy, shaking them up but not spilling any. I look away from the man behind the counter 'cause I hat him and don't want to see him yet. There's a scrawny guy in a John Deere hat and no shave nosing through a cooler of sodas in the rear of the

mart. I could take him if I needed to. I don't want to. All I want right now is some coffee and gas. That's all. I grab a white foam cup from off the stack in the corner and fill it full of gas station turbo java, heavy cream and sugar. The guy in the hat glances at me from behind a rack of magazines. I hate him, too. I lid the top of my coffee and turn towards the register.

"Where you from in New York?"

Blank stare, tick, tick.

"I saw your plates through the window when you pulled up."

"Rochester. I was. Not anymore."

"Sure...Rochester. My cousin lives in Syracuse. You ever get up there? Lotta drugs up in Syracuse. Good time."

I took a good look at his pock-marked face and thought about my gun, the West. I studied it. I had to remember it in case I blew a hole right in the middle of that little yellow tractor on his head. I could've. It might have been easier.

"Right. See ya 'round."

"Which way you headed?"

I reached around my back and felt the solid pistol grip. I pinched it between two fingers.

"West. South. Southwest. Mexico or something. I don't know."

"Well, you ever need anything in Gablerock you let me know. Randy Dixon. Dix. Everybody knows me."

He winked. I thought about red carpet and folding chairs. Black lace.

"Oh ya." I released the grip. "Alright, Dix. Alright."

He plucked a magazine off the rack, held it opposite his soda can, and walked out into the night.

I walked over to the register. Alone in the store with cashier. I set the cup down on the counter and inevitably met this one's puffy, alcoholic face.

"That all tonight, Chief?"

"Ya, that's it. And thirteen on gas."

I mumbled and fumbled for the bills in my pocket, pulling them out and handing them over in wrinkled wads.

"Pump six."

He rang up no sale and lay the flattened dollars out next to the register. The drawer popped open and I saw the piles of fives and tens. No more than two hundred in a drawer at a time.

Thirteen less now. The gun lay heavy in my pants making an impression against my back. I stared at his hairy knuckles rifling through change and eyed the enticing green stacks.

There was a time when holding up a gun to someone's face for money would have repulsed me. Scared the piss out of me. In fact, even as my brother was handing it to me in Rochester as I as getting ready to leave I could not contemplate its utility. It was just a thing to have - in case. Everybody has one now.

We stood on the driveway of our parents' house. A two-story suburban whose walls we had terrorized and raged against in youth. It was eleven p.m. and windy. Fall windy. He handed it to me wrapped in a beach towel taken from my mother's linen closet.

"Here. Just in case. You dump this before you hit the border though, understand? You don't want to end up in some Mexican prison on a weapons charge. We'll never see you again, o.k.? It's alright. Here's the bullets and that's the safety. You remember the rest from the range? Good. Keep it under the seat or back here," he pointed and turned to show me the small of his back, "and if you get pulled over, don't mention it until you have to. It's not registered or anything. Illegal anyway. If it comes down to it, you call me. I'll take care of it." My brother was a cop. Eight years on a city beat. "When you get to California you just find a bridge and launch it into the ocean. But not until you're ready to leave. That place is crazy." He had never been there. "Once you get into Mexico you should pick up something, too. Another gun or at least a blade or something. There's a lot of weirdos out there, Con. Remember that."

The change was made. The lights were too bright and a rotating security cam hung in the corner. I thought about those real life videotape cop show with clips of guys running out of stores into the darkness all over the country only to be hunted down Bradbury style by thousands of Americans with television sets. Not me. Not tonight. I stepped out the door, filled my empty tank and pulled back onto the highway.

It was different in St. Louis. Different circumstances, different Con. I didn't do it for the money either. I was still riding fat from a dish washing job that I had at Porty's in Meadville, crashing with some friends rent free. I had at least four hundred dollars in my pocket at the time. Strange as it sounds. It just seemed natural. Like my right. Never mind the fact that I was pissed drunk on Tequila and Coronas at the time; getting ready for the border. As I swung out the door of the Down Under and onto the sidewalk off Meigs that night everything seemed like it should be mine, was mine, for the taking. Everything. Even the old lady I shoved into the alley, stuck a gun to and demanded money from. She didn't complain. She didn't say a fucking word. I just grabbed her purse, all cool like, staring her right in the eye and dipped my hand right into its shiny, plastic depths. It was dark. The streets were deserted and even my

drinking friends had retired for "work the next morning." Just me, this old lady who had no right out anyway and secluded side alley. I didn't even care that she only had five lousy singles on her at the time. It could have been fifty cents, fifty dollars. That wasn't the rush. It was that look. I never seen a damn thing like it in my life. It was the shit scaredest face I had ever seen in my life and I held the steel lever.

"Five bucks? I should blow your fuckin' face off right now, lady. You know that? Huh? You like that? No? I could put this fuckin' barrel right to your head, scatter your skull and not even give a shit. You know that? Huh? You like that, lady? No? I hope you're ready to die, bitch. Cause I'm gonna kill you. I'm gonna kill you right now."

I pressed the barrel tight against her temple holding her in a security strangle hold from behind. I ran the end... slowly, slowly... around the indentation in her skull. She didn't make a noise, this little old lady. She couldn't have weighed more than a hundred and five pounds with her winter jacket and her rubbers on wet. She was just a little waif of a whitehead. A bag of bones. I could've launched one through her skull, dumped her in the corner and been out of Missouri before the cops even knew what hit them. It was easy.

"Get down on your knees, Grandma! Get down now!" She bent her knees, holding her back and slowly settled down in a puddle of dirty alley liquid on the concrete. "That's good, real good."

I stood in front of her, her face at waist level and looked down into her sagging, watery eyes. I wanted to laugh, to scream, to curse her for her stupid, petty fears. Fears she had been carrying all of her life. Fears she would carry off to her freezing, mud grave. Fears of failure and success, of God and death... fear of some punk sticking a gun in her face at two a.m. I could make them all go away. Go away right now.

I circled around behind, holding her head from the back.

"Don't look at me! Don't you dare look at me. You just look straight ahead at that wall and think about never. Got it? Never."

I flexed my finger and felt the trigger give. Pressure. So much pressure. I took a step back. Then another. I looked at this lady. Her kneeling alone in the dirty alley sludge: trembling, pitiful, dead. She made noises. Faint and pursed. Whimpering. I hated her. Hated her dead.

THE 200 MILLIONTH COMING (CHAPTER 93, VERSES I-VII)

I. i. After passing the Night with Words, I turned off My Machine for Coffee and the Paper. ii. I don't remember the Headline: Someone Somewhere was in Serious Trouble. iii. I made for the Editorial Page, because Opinions (however Stupid), are usually more Compelling than the Somewhat Objective Truth.

II. i. In letters to the Editor, They were still Bitching about Jesus; Who he Was; Where was he From; the Color of his Skin and Eyes; Whether or not he'd had a Dog; & who he would Have Voted For in the Last Presidential Election. ii. All had a different Jesus, but, in every Case, Jesus was Their Boy.

III. i. I rolled My eyes, & as I knew the Actual Jesus would want Me to, decided to Straighten the Whole Thing Out. ii. so, without any Effort, I Scribed an Epistle to the Editor. iii. despite My blurry Eyes and bleary Brain, I felt It to be Good, especially the Line about 2000 Years being too long to Stay Fooled.

IV. i. I posted It, & to My surprise, They published It with Triple Stars, which Meant that, though They didn't necessarily Countenance such Old-Time Blasphemous Heresy, They felt My Words would stir some Shit, & that My Satanic Spewings were Reasonably Well Constructed. ii. the 3 Stars also ensured Me a Place at the 3-Star Letter-Writer's Banquet, & all the tough roast beef that I could chew, at Some Point, in Some Hotel, in the Vaguely Indefinite Future. iii. all told, It seemed a fine 5 Minute's Work, & so I Called It Cool, then Kicked Back to Anticipate a Mailbox full of Good Hate Mail, and maybe a Burning Cross or 2.

V. i. a few Days later, when I thought that I had been Forgotten, (no Promises of Hellfire for Me, or the Likes of Me, had shown up in the Paper, or My Box) I got 2 letters with Unfamiliar Markings, and Knew, by their Vibrations, They had Something to do with Jesus. ii. the First was from a Woman Who Wrote: "CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR LETTER!" & told Me She Knew What I Meant about Looking in the Mirror. She signed Herself proudly as an EX-CHURCH MEMBER. iii. I figured It had to be a Fluke, & opened the Next Envelope. iv. It was from Another Woman, Who Wrote on Recycled Paper, & enclosed a SASE, that I might Write & recommend Holy Books of Truth to Her. further, She spake, & said unto Me that She had Faith in my Faithlessness.

VI. i. I wrote each a Reply, & tossed in some Pertinent Poetry: sufficient to hearten Sincerity, but much more than enough to discourage Lukewarm Curiosity.

VII. i. weeks have passed, & No One has offered to Crucify Me yet. ii. I think I confused Them. iii. I usually do, whenever I Come Back Again.

C Ra McGuirt

THE USUAL AT FRED'S CAFE

by Robert W. Howington

Joey sat at the bar drinking beer. He watched Frankie play nine ball with Uncle Paulie. "It's a good thing you two are gangsters because neither of you woulda made a living as pool hall hustlers. Minnesota Fats doesn't have anything to worry about from you two losers."

Frankie missed another easy shot. "SHIT!"

Uncle Paulie followed that by knocking the cue ball off the table. "FUCK!"

Joey put down his beer and slapped his knee. He let out a howl. "You both suck!"

Uncle Paulie playingly made a move like he was going to come over with his pool cue and break it over Joey's head.

"Christ, I know street corner whores who can play pool better than you two."

"Yeh, I'm sure you do," Frankie said. "You sleep with a different one every night."

After missing two more shots each, both Uncle Paulie and Frankie agreed to stop playing and joined Joey at the bar. Tommy, the bartender, brought them the usual --- 24oz schooners of Shiner Bock.

Uncle Paulie lit a Cuban cigar. "Joey, you ever thought about getting some therapy? I mean, you're the craziest, meanest S.O.B. I've ever met. You don't ever give an inch for nobody. Look at the way you talked to me and Frankie while we were playing pool. Here we are just trying to have some fun and you're busting our balls the whole time. When the time comes for you to die that's what's gonna get you killed."

"I'm glad you're my friend and not my enemy because I wouldn't want to be taken out by a tough guy like you. I don't think it'd be a nice experience."

Joey took a pull off his beer and told Tommy to give him a bar whiskey chaser. "I know I'm perfectly sane. The people who're nuts are the people working at 9-to-5 jobs taking shit from an asshole supervisor all day, the people who don't complain when the food they order at a restaurant tastes like an under cooked microwave tv dinner, the people who think their vote actually makes a difference, the people who depend on their tax refunds for vacation money, the people who think the so-called American Dream, owning a house and buying a new car every three years and putting two-point-five brats through college, is something to strive for. Those people are the crazy ones. They're the ones getting therapy. The only therapy I need is putting a bullet in somebody's head."

Louie the Loan Shark walked into Fred's Cafe and Uncle Paulie told him to come sit next to them at the bar. He ordered a beer and a Fred Burger. "Tell Ernie to put lots of onions on that, Tommy."

Joey lit a Camel wide. "So, Louie, you need me to cut the thumb off somebody's hand? Break their legs? Throw them off a building?"

Louie picked up a toothpick and started chewing on it.

"Maybe next week."

"I'll keep my schedule open."

"Joey, has anybody ever told you that you're the spitting image in looks and personality of the whacko mob guy Joe Pesci played in GOODFELLAS?"

"Yes. And like I tell everybody else who asks me that question," Joey said, "I think that Pesci fella got himself an Oscar because he was the spitting image of me not the other way around. The director of that movie, Martin Scorsese, was friends with my Uncle Johnny. You see, Uncle Johnny is proud of his nephew, Joey Automatic. He brags about me to everybody he meets. I'm the son he never had. Scorsese got all his ideas for Pesci's character from Uncle Johnny talking on and on about me. Hollywood couldn't invent a character like myself. I'm an American original. An original gangster."

Joey excused himself to go take a piss. Tommy brought Louie his Fred Burger and another round of schooners for everybody. They all looked at Detective Bryan Massey when he walked in. He came over and sat down.

Frankie's trigger finger began twitching.

Uncle Paulie told Tommy to get the cop a schooner. He pulled a stuffed #10 envelope out of his jacket and handed it over to the detective. He rifled through it, counting the money it held.

"damn, Paulie, I guess business was booming this past week. Now I can take that vacation to Cancun, Mexico, this summer."

Frankie jumped off his stool and got into the detective's face. "You make me sick, you motherfucker. We pay you off so that you'll turn your back to what we do but you sit there all smug as hell thinking you're better than we are. You're a worse crook than any of us. I have to laugh every time I see a cop car with that To Protect and To Serve written on the side. Yeh, right. You can kiss my ass."

The detective put the envelope in his pocket. He took out his .38 revolver and stuck it in Frankie's face. He pulled the hammer back and put his finger around the trigger. "You're this close, Paulie."

Uncle Paulie told them to both calm down. "We're all businessmen here. Let's start acting like it, gentlemen."

Joey came out of the bathroom and, seeing Frankie with a gun in his face, he pulled out his .45 auto and told the detective to put the gun away.

The detective looked over at Joey. "Eat shit and die, you little asshole."

Uncle Paulie told Joey to put his gun away. "Detective Massey isn't gonna pull the trigger. Let's all calm down."

Louie excused himself out the back door. Tommy and Ernie followed him.

Joey told the detective to put the gun away again. "That's the last time I'm asking you."

"I'm not doing anything until you put your piece away."

Joey fired a shot. It hit the detective in the shoulder of the arm he held the gun with. The arm went limp and the gun fell out of his hand. Blood poured down his jacket's sleeve. He put

his good hand over the wound to try to stop the bleeding. "YOU CRAZY FUCKER! YOU CAN'T SHOOT A COP!"

Joey walked up to the detective and put the gun to his head. "I don't shoot people. I kill them."

BAM!

The detective fell dead. The money in the envelope spilled out onto the floor. Blood soaked through it.

Uncle Paulie took the cigar out of his mouth. "Bury him deep."

SHE'S SO COLD

by Thaddeus Rutkowski

I wasted a lot of time looking for dead bodies to have sex with. I offered to be on call for an autopsy, but the phone never rang. I tried to make connections in the funeral business, but I could not befriend a single mortician. I took my dates to graveyards, but I did not succeed in scaring anyone.

So I asked my girlfriend to take a cold bath. I figured, rightly, that this would make her skin turn blue. Then I asked her to lie on a metal table, stay very still and not make a sound.

When I got out the cotton batting, she broke our code of silence.

"What's that for?" she asked.

"The body cavities must be stuffed as part of the embalming," I said.

I brought out a needle and thread.

"I didn't know you sewed," my girlfriend said.

"After the body cavities are stuffed, they must be sewn shut," I said.

"I'm going to write to Dear Abby and ask if this is normal," my girlfriend said.

"The mouth must be sealed in a cheerful expression," I said, "before cosmetics are applied."

I turned on the bright lights, the kind used for surgery, and then I got down to the serious work of embalming.

"Do live women frighten you?" my girlfriend asked.

I kept working.

"Attractive clothing must be chosen," I said, "for the viewing and burial."

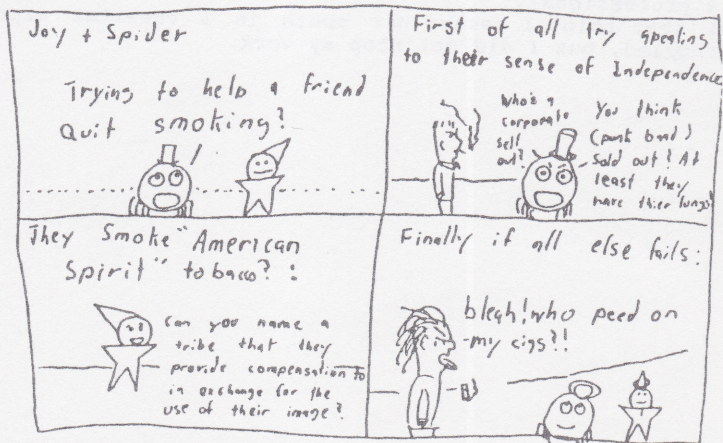
"Maybe you should talk to someone," my girlfriend said, "like a professional."

At that point I sealed her mouth in a cheerful expression. She struggled, but I did not stop my work.

THERE IS NO PAROLE DOWN THE LAST MILE

Johnny couldn't get his tire iron to bend the steel bars on the liquor store window. I was supposed to be the lookout because I had told him it wouldn't work and I didn't want to do this job anyway. The jewelry heist had been a cake-walk compared to this. Now he wanted my help taking the hinges off of the basement door so he could break in that way instead. Standing in the small parking field under all the neon lights with all the windows snapping on in the adjacent apartments I wanted to split and leave him there but he was my best friend so off with a thundering crash went the door and we were in. Then it went bad, John Q. Public decided to investigate and as he was about to enter me and Johnny raised up our tire irons and waited. I knew Johnny would kill him as soon as he stuck his head in. I remember the dull thud as both of our bars landed across the back of his skull. It was so quiet; somehow I had expected more noise when a man died. I almost tossed seeing this dude lying fetal in a pool of blood. Johnny grabbed me by the arm and whispered: "Quick, we got to get out of here, now !!!" Johnny drew life without but never rolled over on me, never. He died at Attica State during the prison riots when then Gov. Rockefeller sent the National Guard in to quell the uprisings. Autopsy on Johnny revealed a single blow to the base of the skull from a guard's billy club as the probable cause of death. Johnny would have loved the irony of it. I used what little money I had plus what I could get going door-to-door from the 'heart' fund to bury him. Johnny was laid to rest at Hempstead Cemetery located in South Hempstead, Long Island, N.Y. across from the fire department. I often imagine him rolling over in his grave every time the sirens go off. Johnny would have loved the irony of it.

elliott



Art Biggs

SCREAMING A

screaming into the bald wind
an echo chamber release
strutting down my avenue
conviction wrapped around
like a ball and chain
i hear the freedom songs
of slaves laying track

wired into an electrician's
nightmare-
fuses from the five and dime
30's and 20's a layman's
confusion

i have an atomic mouthwash
southern comfort on a
bristle-less brush

and the mirror shows the age
before it's time in blood red
vessel tracks

as the hooks hold the wet
shower curtain-

life is a thread
a thread worn rug
a bookies odds

i walk the plank in
stilettoed trance

screamin j
howlin' wolf

and the dance of a country
squirrel across the
avenue with a mouthful
of nut stash

hold the bottle in the
bag
ether to mouth
grab it when it's available

the monsoons are on us
and i'm screaming A into

the bald wind.

Ana Christy

ROOT CANAL

he says with sadistic delight
not one
but two teeth are involved-
i decipher this through
oriental/english padded mask

his rubber finger twists at
the pain and i begin to think
sid vicious is my hero and
this dentists bears a grudge
i don't know about

i am waiting for laughing gas
but i know it wouldn't do the
job - i could use a laugh
and

i begin to think of nancy
whining
wanting her H
needle-
twists chubby checker style
deep into the root

NOVOCAINE-
cocaine without the high

bright light showing every
pore

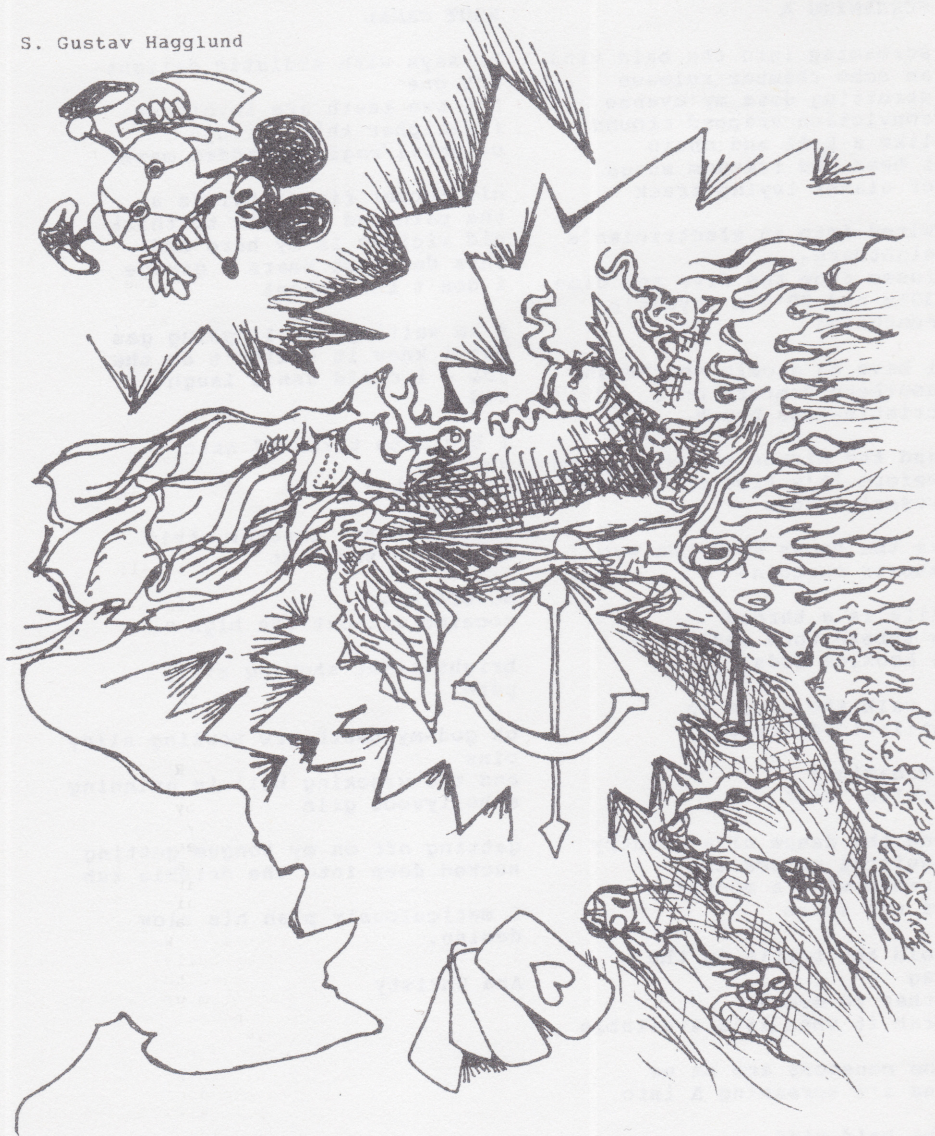
oh god-my teeth are bowling alley
pins
and the wrecking ball is grinning
a hollywood grin

getting off on my tongue getting
sucked deep into the dribble tub

i meticulously plan his slow
demise.

Ana Christy

S. Gustav Hagglund



SPRINGTIME IN THE CITY

Springtime in the City

I swagger my way down First Avenue
in purple

business suit with tail of manstyle black
raincoat flying

I swing my arms

one bag full of drugs from McKay's

including 100 syringes

an empty briefcase

two grungers sneer at me

If you only knew I think

you would wipe that look off your face

How odd it is, the way tattoos

could change the complexion

of a scene so thoroughly

my business suit would diminish

into background ornamentation

if they only knew about my

brightly colored skin

the tragedy of my thoughts

smashes me in the forehead

I pass a bum sitting in fresh piss

and stare carefully right into

those bloodshot eyes above

that carefree childish grin

drooling with tooth decay

just finished a pint of something

cheap and strong

with Navy watchcap pulled down

over scarecrow hair

I didn't notice at first

that she is a woman

sexless pure alcohol

Her eyes revealed no hint of smiling

they never do

no matter what the mouth tries to imply

I study the gory details to

remind myself that romance

is a self-invented illusion

I do not want to escape reality

of blistering bloated face

there is no princess in the mirror

tragic doorway looms ahead

inhabited by gray panthers, their legs

wrapped in blankets, more watchcaps

they must be good headgear

for open air living

the pair of elderly renegades recline

on plastic milk cartons

the woman sports a black cane

long old lady housedress beneath grimy

coat the man's swollen veiny nose

The darkness came over me

just then, as I

emptied the pint

of cheap scotch

and slammed the bottle

across the jaw

of the off duty cop

who had sat beside me

telling me of his evil

mutilation of prostitutes

He drank too much and

then he told me

what he did with

them after he

fucked them.

And when he told me

about the one killing

he did,

and how she begged him

not to cut her

while his nightstick was

shoved up her and

his knife began to slice

into her breasts,

and he was laughing

at her because she was just a

whore,

I let him have it,

to stop him from

opening his mouth.

Gary Goude

HE TOLD ME HIS DREAMS

he was walking by the

white hen pantry

on sixth and green

and they turned around the

corner in the car

opened fire on him

he was hit over and over

again; his teeth were

shattered by bullets

he said he died then

and he saw from up above

his bloody body

he even saw his obituary

but then he went back, did it

over again: this time

he was in the doctor's

office. It's always like this,

he thinks, always

running away from death

Janet Kuypers

like WC Fields without the ribald humor
 they stare straight into their penniless
 night they do not beg they are waiting
 for death patiently because they know
 it will come when it is ready
 I am glad for them it's Springtime in the City
 though I can see they have spent
 this winter huddled in
 that same terrible doorway staring
 through the icy wind
 I speed up my pace, marching
 through the early nighttime strollers
 on their Friday evening dates
 I have to get home
 I am coming from therapy
 finished talking of the horror
 of useless existence

after going through another session,
 I am hungry
 food will soothe me will top off the panic
 the anxiety the threatened tears
 I become angry with the contented ones

"Fuckhead," I grumble to the cab driver
 who turns the corner with a screech or tires
 I slow down on purpose
 make him wait
 look in the windshield
 and mouth the word "fuckhead" clearly

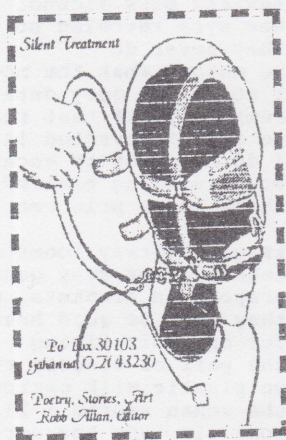
"Fuckhead," I curse the two guys who for
 some unknown reason think they are
 walking faster than me, passing me while I
 am not concentrating on what I am doing
 then slowing down so that to keep my pace I
 will have to step on their heels and walk up
 their assholes

"Fuckhead," I brush into the guy who
 has just
 walked right into my path
 and stopped dead in the middle
 of the sidewalk
 my McKay's bag smashes him
 I hope his hand gets cut
 on my box of diabetic works
 yes, it's Springtime in the City
 a while ago I put down my
 heroin needle
 for the last time
 and went into mourning
 I have not finished with it yet
 needles were my tools of pleasure

His

Head explodes
 and he's two feet away
 staggering
 trying to fall
 but still wandering
 in circles
 like he don't know
 where the ground is
 no more
 and he falls
 up against me
 his eyes looking blind
 his brains and blood
 sliding down my arm
 and we both drop
 to the ground
 his body jerking
 against me
 and i got to get
 out of here
 i got to find
 a place
 i can call my own
 where i can lock
 the bad shit
 outside my door....

Oberc



just to have
the needle in my vein
without getting high
and dooming myself once again
to endless repetition
of suicidal conduct

I prayed to have my needles back
my obsession
and you always really do get what you
pray for, so don't pray for anything
if you don't understand the full implication
and all the possible nuances of what
you are asking for

Now I use needles
up to six a day inject
something that doesn't raise
the hackles on my neck, the hair on my arm
that doesn't wickly drip down
the back of my throat
that doesn't return me back gently to the
womb to float in ecstasy
Do this
and you will quickly wish you would never
ever see another needle
I wish this again as I wish every day now
to never see another needle
but I am afraid to pray.

Here I am in my tragic little box
I can't get out
You can't get in
Yet I am
one second from stepping off the curb
stomping out into traffic
and screaming "Fuckheads"
then proceeding to give a lecture on
how to show little respect
how to be a considerate atomic particle
and how to use the organ inside the
skullcase

Fortunately I am now in my own neighborhood distracted by the good looking long-haired boys all wrapped in leather remembering how I used to

[illegible]

want to be one of them
 when I didn't know any better
 I am coming up on
 two rough guys walking with that fake
 bowlegged walk the macho types like to
 do so you'll see that it's so huge
 they have trouble
 walking
 one says "I'm just waiting for
 her to do something stupid"

"Oh," the other one says, "Don't wait
 for her, she might not accommodate you."

Springtime in the City
 Fuckheads to the right of me
 Fawning slobbering couples to the left
 extreme tragedy putting in an appearance
 every block or so
 and on the main streets like twenty-third
 and fourteenth
 there is always a command performance

finally in the Korean Store which has
 just changed its name to SOK deli
 I pay for my yogurt and diet ginger ale
 while the resident panhandler counts
 out pennies for an Old English 800 in a can
 but I see a scene somewhere else
 of Seagram's 7 bottles scattered around
 the outside of an abandoned greenhouse
 which leads me to a vision of two kids
 laughing with embarrassment at a used
 condom next to a Seagram's bottle
 on the second floor of the haunted house
 on the back road to Hobart, NY

At my side now two guys who are dressed
 like nerds wearing thick glasses, forties
 haircuts and polyester jackets
 are looking at a sixpack of guinness dark
 that one holds at arm's length
 as if it was a carton of poison
 the other pulls each bottle out and turns it
 like he was checking eggs for cracks

It's time for me to go home now
 and give this tragedy a chance to
 continue its development
 without any further cynical commentary
 afterall, it is Springtime in the City and
 even basket case emotional cripples
 like me
 can dream.

J.D. Rage



OVER

I'm on top
 and you're beneath me
 and some say
 this is dominance,
 but I say
 so what
 or right on.
 I feel your body
 writhe,
 neither strutting
 some power
 or even

posturing

any

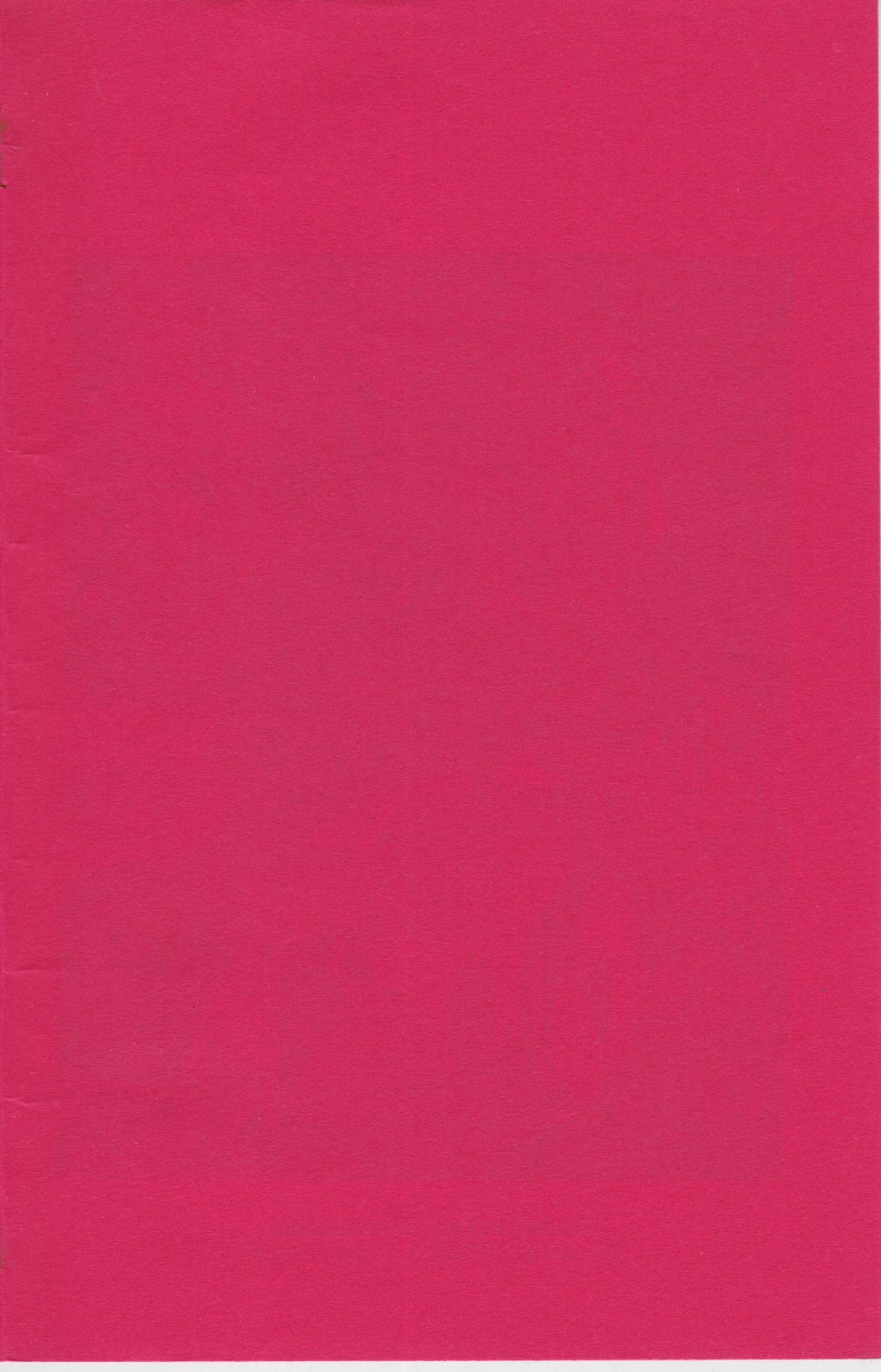
thing.

Paula Weinman

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